



ARCHEOLOGY DIVISION

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) Archeology Division works to identify, protect and preserve the state's irreplaceable archeological heritage.

What We Do

The Archeology Division administers the Texas Archeological Stewardship Network, Texas Archeology Month, Historic Texas Lands Plaque Program, special projects, various forms of public assistance, and project reviews.

Texas Archeological Stewardship Network

The Texas Archeological Stewardship Network is composed of more than 100 stewards throughout Texas who work with THC archeologists to assist citizens statewide. The network serves as a model for other similar programs in the United States.

Texas Archeology Month

THC staff coordinates the annual observance of Texas Archeology Month in partnership with other archeological groups. The month-long October celebration acquaints Texans with their unique archeological heritage through many special events such as archeology fairs, museum exhibits, lectures, and demonstrations.

Public Assistance and Education

Staff responds to public inquiries regarding prehistoric and historic archeological sites in Texas. The office offers archeological consultation to state agencies, professional and avocational archeologists, landowners, heritage groups, and interested individuals.

Historic Texas Lands Plaque

This program recognizes Texas landowners who have worked to protect important historic places from frontier forts to Ice Age hunting camps.

Marine Archeology Program

The state marine archeologist supports efforts to locate, investigate, and protect hundreds of historic shipwrecks in Texas coastal waters. To accomplish this goal, staff conducts



TPWD

Native American dancer at Hueco Tanks Interpretive Fair.

cultural resource management reviews for projects that might impact shipwrecks on state-owned submerged lands. The state marine archeologist also maintains a database of shipwrecks in Texas and carries out a program to identify and investigate significant shipwreck sites using volunteer assistance from the Texas Archeological Stewardship Network.

Cultural Resource Management

Staff assists federal and state agencies in complying with state and federal laws to preserve archeological and historic sites.

Division staff:

- Reviews public construction projects and recommends ways to minimize impact to key sites. As part of the review process, the THC staff responds to more than 12,000

public inquiries annually and serves more than 2,600 cities, counties and agencies (both state and federal).

- Issues Texas Antiquities Permits for all archeological investigations on public land or within coastal waters, approximately 400 permits each year.

Historical Designations

Staff coordinates the nomination of archeological sites as State Archeological Landmarks or for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Designation is often the most effective way to protect archeological sites threatened by new development or vandalism. The division also provides support to the Antiquities Advisory Board—citizens appointed by the THC to consider issues related to the Antiquities Code of Texas.

Texas Archeological Sites Atlas Restricted Database

The Archeological Atlas is a computerized database of more than 65,000 archeological sites in Texas. Available to qualified researchers, it allows users to easily retrieve information about historic Texas sites.

Special Projects

La Salle Archeology Projects

In 1995, the THC discovered 17th-century French explorer La Salle's ship, *La Belle*, in Matagorda Bay. The ship was part of an expedition to establish a colony in the New World. The award-winning book, *From A Watery Grave*, describes the search for and excavation of *La Belle*. A consortium of museums on the Texas coast—the La Salle Odyssey Museums—feature various aspects of the discoveries made by the THC archeologists at the Belle and La Salle's colony, Fort St. Louis. Beginning in August 2015, visitors will be able to view the reconstructed hull of *La Belle* and an impressive sampling of its cargo.

Pre-Republic Site Investigations

Recently, investigations have been conducted at several pre-republic period sites including Texas' first cotton plantation, Bernardo, established in 1822 on the lower Brazos River. The Texas Army under Sam Houston's command encamped at the Bernardo Plantation prior to the Battle of San Jacinto.



Panther Cave pictograph

Sarahville de Viesca, the headquarters of Robertson's Colony, was founded in 1833 near the Falls of the Brazos in Central Texas. In 2006, THC excavations confirmed the location of this early settlement. Historical research associated with this project led to the discovery of the probable gravesite of Texas Ranger James Coryell. Coryell was stationed at the fort located at Sarahville and died of wounds sustained during an Indian attack in 1837.

Curatorial Facility Certification Program

The Curatorial Facility Certification Program certifies curatorial facilities that house state-associated held-in-trust archeological collections obtained off public lands. The certification program insures that a high quality care and management of held-in-trust collections is used by repositories and museums. Program staff also provides general outreach to museums and repositories on ways to properly care for archeological collections.

How to Reach Us

Staff members are available to answer questions and provide preservation assistance. Please contact us at:
Phone: 512.463.6096
Fax: 512.463.8927
Email: archeology@thc.state.tx.us



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P.O. BOX 12276 • AUSTIN, TX 78711-2276
PHONE 512.463.6100 • FAX 512.475.4872
www.thc.state.tx.us